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THE Minister's Reasons

For His not reading the

Kings Declaration,

Friendly Debated.

LIBRARY OF THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY NEW YORK

By A Dissenter.

Allowed to be Published this 21st day of June 1688.

SIR,

I Am beholding to you for Publishing the Reasons you alledg for your refusal to Read His Majesties *Declaration* in your Church; for by them I discern, that he who writ the first Letter to a *Dissenter*, wherein he told us you were convinc'd of your Error, in being Severe towards us, and that we had not now to do with those Rigid Prelates, who made it a matter of Conscience to give us the least Indulgence, writ this of his own Head, without any Authority from you; but that He, or They who writ a Treatise, which was Published a little before the Kings *Declaration*, Entituled, *The Vanity of all pretensions for Toleration*, (wherein the Question is put and Answered, *Shall we give up the Cause, and subscribe to a Toleration? Nothing less, and that because in our Circumstances, it is not only contrary to Religion and Civil Prudence, but also to Charity and Compassion*) were guided in this matter by the same temper of Mind, with that which is discovered in your reasonings, which are as like one to the other as Face is to Face in a Glass; for therein the Author, who is your Advocate, and

without doubt had both your Countenance and Assistance, tells us, That *the practice of punishing Dissenters is contrary neither to the Doctrine or Practice of Christ, and therefore He hopes, they that use it upon great occasion may be discharged of the odious Imputation of Antichrist*; and that *Experience hath taught us, that Compulsion in matters of Religion serves many times to render Men more Teachable, and willing to be Instructed*; And besides all this, That *a steady and discreet Execution of the Laws against Dissenters, might happily have been a much more merciful Conduct, even with respect to them, then that Remissness or Connivance which tempted them to presumptuous Sins.* One touch he hath also at the Kings Prerogative, not like to your present reasoning, which calls it into Question, but by way of Allowance and Commendation; for he says, *We owe it only to the Wisdom and Foresight of His late Majesty, that some of the most considerable Laws are now in being, I mean that of* 35 *Q.* Elizabeth, *which He saved by His Prerogative, as well as Men, when it was condemned to be Abolished, and if His Clemency had saved many, who the Laws had justly Condemned, Why should it not save a Law that had done Him and His Ancestors no small Service, and was then doom'd to an undeserved Fate.*

I intend not to enter upon Examination of this your Advocate Treatise, which is sufficiently refelled and rebuked by His Majesties *Royal Declaration of Indulgence*; but to shew you, until you give a better Evidence to the contrary, then hitherto you have done, how the Dissenters are to interpret **your Charity, your Compassion, your Mercy, your Clemency**, and **your due tenderness towards them, when you have an opportunity of shewing your Inclinations without danger**: But I pass from this to what I intend, and that is to make a brief enquiry into the weight of your Reasons, which I suppose, you therefore make Publick, that they might be well consider'd & scann'd, in order thereto I have without partiallity, or injury to their proper sence, not Literally Transcribed but Extracted the substance of them.

That which hath principally induced me to this, is, because I think you either do not your self understand the substance of the Kings *Declaration*, or else by your not Reading it, and Mis-representing it, you seem unwilling that it should be understood by any others: For thus you begin.

I. *To take away the* Test *and* Penal Laws *at this time is but one step from the introdueing of* Popery, *and therefore to read such a Declaration in our Churches, though it do not immediately bring* Popery *in*, **yet it sets open our Church Doors for it, and then it will take its own time to enter.**

Here is a far fetch'd Inference; How would you be understood? Suppose it granted for Argument sake, that to take away the *Test* and *Penal Laws* is but one step from the introducing of *Popery*; Is your Reading the *Declaration* a nearer step to the introducing of *Popery* then such a Repeal? If you should Read it, will that open your Church Doors so wide

wide that *Popery* may enter without any more to do, though the *Penal Laws* and *Test* should not be taken away? I take the true and genuine sense of the Kings Declaration to be **a setting open your Church Doors that** Papists **and** Dissenters, **who have no mind to be there, may not be Compelled by Temporal Penalties to come in, and abide there, whether they will or no**; For you have hitherto opened your Church Doors, that you may drive them in, and in force of *Penal Laws* to keep them there in Spiritual Bondage against their Wills; and if they have at any time, for above these Hundred Years, adventured to start out of your Churches to free themselves from this sort of Bondage, you by your Excommunication prosecuted them into Corporal Bondage without Redemption: Its accounted an ill Omen to stumble at the Threshold, but this you have done **by calling that an opening your Doors to let** Popery **in, which is intended only to let** Papists **and** Dissenters **out, and to leave you with all that are of the Religion Established by Law in the full and peaceable Possession of your Churches, and to enjoy them with Security to Perpetuity.**

II. You say, *Should we comply with this Order all good Protestants would Despise and Hate us, and then we may be easily Crush'd, & may soon fall without any Pity.*

In reasoning thus, you are either very Censorious and Uncharitable toward all Dissenters, or else you greatly mistake their Temper; For your reasoning herein can conclude no less, then, either that there is not one good Protestant among all the Dissenters, or else, if there be any such, that they would Dispise and Hate you for doing of that which is their Interest to do themselves, and to have done by all Men, and by you in particular, **that the Justice, Reason and Clemency which the King has manifested in his Gracious Declaration may be known and acknowledged by all**: If any other good Protestants should Despise and Hate you for it, for which they have no cause, yet you do not suppose, that they are the Men that would Crush you; and for the Dissenters, though you Mis-represent them in the Close of your Letter, yet herein I would do them this right, to rid you of your groundless Fears; You may be assured that for your Reading & Pursuing the intent of the Kings Declaration which Tends both to your and their Security in Equity and Law, they will not Crush you, for thereby they will expose themselves to be Crush'd together with you; so that I see no cause for your Fears, either of Dishonour or Downfal, unless you resolve to throw your selves down, and pull down the Dissenters also to verifie your subsequent Prognostications.

III. You say, *We fall a little sooner for not Reading the* Declaration, *If our Gracious Prince resent this as an Act of an Obstinate, Peevish or Factious Disobedience (as our Enemies will be sure to represent it to Him) we shall as certain-*

ly fall, and not long after if we do read it, and then we ſhall fall Unpitied and Deſpiſed, and it may be with the Curſes of the Nation, whom we have ruined by our Compliance, and this is the way never to riſe more.

I do not Reckon my ſelf to be among the Number of your Enemies, and therefore, though you are ſomewhat Peeviſh, I would not that you ſhould be repreſented to the King as Obſtinate: For my Hopes are, that upon better Conſideration you will ſhew your ſelves Obedient to his Commands; But if it ſhould prove otherwiſe, as your Enemies will not, ſo your Friends cannot Excuſe you, as being altogether Free from Faction, But how comes it to paſs that you being a Miniſter of the Goſpel ſhould fix your Eye ſo ſteadity upon the Diſhonour being Unpitied and Deſpiſed, as inſeparable Concomitants of a Certain Fall not long after you have read the Kings Declaration, if you Comply to Read it? A ſettled Apprehenſion that you ſhall certainly Fall, whether you Read or not Read, is ſufficient to Diſturb your Fancy, ſo as to Interrupt the making of a Solid Judgment in reference to your Duty, and Diſcharge of a good Conſcience towards God: There is as little need, as there is Juſt Occaſion for you to Surmize, as you do, that your Complyance will Ruin the Nation, and procure their Curſes; for I cannot ſee any ſuch moral certainty attending your reading as Ruining the Nation: Thoſe other Ingredients might have been pretermitted, if you have no Diſpoſition, by diſcovering your ſeeming Fears, to ſtir up a real fear in the minds of others. I think it more nearly concerns you, ſetting aſide all thoughts of Honour and Diſhonour, good Report or bad Report, to ſee to it that you have the Law of God on your ſide, to excuſe your Diſobedience to the King; for otherwiſe the ill Conſequences of contending with Soveraign Power, and inticing others to do the like after your example will lye heavy upon you. For tho you Mention onely your own Fall, yet you intimate plainly enough, that you are not to Fall alone, and never to Riſe more, but that this will be the Fate of all the Proteſtant Chruches alſo, and therefore you proceed after that Manner.

IV. *May I Suffer all that can be Suffer'd in this World, rather than to contribute to the final Ruin of the beſt Church in the World.*

So that it ſeemes if you Fall, the beſt Church in the World muſt Fall alſo, and that not partially, or for a ſeaſon, but Totally and Finally. Do you not Attribute too much to your ſelf in this? Are you the only Pillar upon which the beſt Church in the World is Built? And are *Penal Laws* the onely ſtrength by which you Support the Church? If thoſe you will have in this point to be accounted, your Adverſaries, ſhould prevail (as once you know they did do, for Twenty Years together) to Diveſt you of your Coercive Power, your Experience may Dictate to you; that a *Proteſtant Church* here, as well as elſe where has ſubſiſted, and may Subſiſt through Divine Aſſiſtance, when that coercive

coercive Power is taken out of your Hands: However I acknowledg no Man can justifie himself for contributing to the Ruin of any true Church; but in this you are not singular, as you would make your selves to be; the *Dissenter* may claim Equally with your selves a share in such a resolution as this, and say as you do; may I Suffer still, as I have Suffered all that you have Inflicted upon me, or what else the Providence of God Allots for my Portion; rather then that I should contribute to the Ruin of the best, or any Church of Christ in the World.

V. You say, *I suppose no Minister of the* Church *of* England, *can give his consent to the* Declaration, *and reading the* Declaration *in our Churches, will be with great Reason interpreted a Consent.*

You might have taken caution from your own Postscript to your Reasons, concerning *Henry Care*, not to have made your Supposition, so Universally Comprehensive of every Minister of the *Church* of *England*; in regard you say, Reading is Teaching, and signifies Consent to the matter Read; and you Instance in Four or Five which did Read, and I think I may more probably suppose, that if any precise Disquisition should happen to be made, many of your Ministers who did not Read, may chuse to excuse themselves, rather by their not receiving Directions from their Ordnary to Read, then to alledge as you do, that they did refuse to do it, because they could not consent to the matter of the *Declaration*.

VI. You say, *By our Law, all Ministerial Officers are Accountable for their Actions, which shews, that our Law does not look upon the Ministers of the Church to be meer Machines and Tools, to be managed wholly by the will of Superiours, without Exercising any Act of Judgment or Reason themselves.*

Apply this to your usual Practice of publishing all such *Declarations* in your Churches, as have been commended to you by your *Ordnary*, or his Official: Tell me in what case you have charged your Conscience, so much as to make a private Judgment, which you ought always to have done whether all the sentences of Excommunication, and Ecclesiastical Censures and Orders which you have published; Censures of Church-Wardens, for refusing the Oath prescribed by your Cannons: Censures for not paying your Apparitors and Officers the Fees they Demanded. Excommunications purposely contrived and improved to prevent many of their Votes at Elections: Interdicting any Divine Service, to be performed in a Church for Burying of persons Excommunicated for Non-conformity in Consecrated ground, till the Church-Wardens caused the Dead Corps to be Dug up again, and removed: Publishing whole Sheets full of Orders of *Sessions*, wherein such *Dissenters* as conformed so far as to come to Church, have been reproached, as doing it to save their Money; and therefore giving a charge to mark all such as did not Kneel at their Prayers, and stand

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up at the *Gloria Patri*: Orders that none ſhould be relieved that fell under Poverty, if they came not to Church and Conformed to your Ceremonies, if they were able of Body ſo to do; and many others of like nature: Have all theſe in your private Judgment been warranted by the Law of God? Do you Eſteem it a light thing to Caſt, or Publiſh any Mans being caſt out of all Chriſtian Society, and delivered over to Sathan for ſuch matters as are no crimes againſt any Divine Law? I take it (for ought that ever I ſaw manifeſted to the contrary) that a Subjection to the command of your Superiours, as being onely in ſuch things Miniſterial Offices, has been at leaſt your tacite Plea, for not ſtirring up or troubling your Conſciences, to make a Diſcretive Judgment; whether the Act of your Superiour which you are commanded to Publiſh, were Lawful, or Unlawful, by the Law either of God, or of the Land; and to tell you the truth, I do not think you are in the Eye of the Law ſuch Criminals as on this particular occaſion you would render your ſelves to be, in caſe you ſhould Read the Kings *Declaration* in Obedience to his Command, though you did not approve the matter of it in your private Judgment; it not being your Province, poſitively to determine concerning it in point of Law: You might with better pretence of Conſcience, (if preſſed to it in yonr own mind, as an Act neceſſary to avoid a Sin againſt God) after the Reading of the *Declaration*, have taken your Exceptions to it in yonr particular Station, then to have followed the courſe you have taken, as it were by common conſent, one in the name of all the Reſt, thus openly to Declaim againſt it, for that had been an Exerciſing of ſuch an Act of Judgment, and Reaſon, if the cauſe Required it, as a Miniſter of the Goſpel might have done in reference to God, whatever had been the conſequence of it in reſpect to Men: And the Proſpect you had of this (as you afterwards manifeſt) does not excuſe but rather condemn you for ſeeing better things, and following the worſe.

VII. You ſay, *Our Law ſuppoſes, that what we do in Obedience to Superiours, we make our own Act by doing it: This is the onely Reaſon I know, why we muſt not obey a* Prince *againſt the Laws of the Land, or the Laws of God; becauſe what we do, let the Authority be what it will that Commandt it, becomes our own Act, and we are Reſponſible for it.*

If you State this as a general Caſe of every Subject, I ſuppoſe you miſtake the Law, for I cannot conceive how a Clerk in *Parliament*, *Privy Council*, *Court of Juſtice*, *or Convocation* who Writes, and afterwards Reads openly what his Superiours have Dictated, and Commanded him to Read ſhould be ſuppoſed in the Eye of the Law, to be his own Act: If you mean by your Laws, you being Miniſters are Reſponſible for what you do in any other Manner, then the reſt of the Kings Subjects, or Miniſterial Officers are, you ſhould have done well to have ſhewed it, for

for till that be done I know not how to Distinguish of your Case as Different from other Ministerial Clerks.

The onely Reason you alledge, why you must not obey a Prince against the Law of the Land or the Laws of God, is both Complicated, and Equivocal; For if you willingly walk after any Command, which is contrary to the Law of God, let the Authority be as you say what it will, that Commands it, whether of a Prince singly, or a Prince in conjunction with a Parliament; I grant, that it becomes your own Act, for which you are responsible to God; But it is not so in many Cases, where a Prince may Command to Do, or forbear, what a particular Statute forbids or appoints, Because He may therein Exercise His Prerogative according to the Common Law.

Besides, if you being a Minister should obey the Kings, and your Lawful Superiours Order, and Read his Declaration, by which some Penal Laws are suspended, and this Act of Prerogative should afterwards come to be Questioned in Parliament to whom are you Responsible? Surely not to the King, nor to your Ordnary, whom you have Obeyed; you cannot mean that, not to any ordinary Court of Justice, for no Information or Indictment will lye against you there at the Kings Suit; you must be then Arraign'd for it in Parliament, or no where, And if you come to be Responsible for it there, I think your Rubrick established by Law, and our Ignorance of any other Law will be a Sufficient Plea to excuse you, For it will be a President of the First Impression; I know not of any Parish Minister has ever heretofore been Question'd and Condemn'd in Parliament for obeying an Order in this Kind of His Prince or Lawful Superiour.

VIII. *Ministers are bound to take care that what they Publish in their Churches, be neither contrary to the Laws of the Land, nor the good of the Church. Ministers of Religion are not look'd upon as common Cryers, but what they Read, they are supposed to recommend too, though they do no more then read it, For is not Reading Teaching? It may be it were no fault to consent to the Declaration, but if I consent to teach my People what I do not consent to my self, I am sure that is a great one.*

I take it for granted that you have sufficiently demonstrated to all Men, that Reading and not Preaching off Book, is Teaching, for that has been your ordinary Practice for many Years, and it is true, by Reading you Teach your People to understand what you Read, but when that is done, your People are at liberty to judge, and you also in this Present Case being ordered to read what the King hath declared, are at liberty to Pen a Sermon that may be a Paraphrase upon what you read before, and read that in your Pulpit afterwards, so as therein you do not transgress the Law of God, or of the Land, and by that your People may understand whether you consent to, or dissent from what you have read, and if your are commanded by Law to read what you do not consent

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to in your own Conſcience, and for the diſcharge of a good Conſcience towards God, let your People know ſo much; I think you therein diſcharge both the Office of a Miniſter to Man, and Duty of a Teacher to God; and in ſuch a Caſe, tho you ſhould afterwards be judged by Mans Law, yet you may with a quiet Mind, therein commend your Cauſe to God, who judgeth righteouſly.

Be it ſo, That Miniſters are not look'd upon as common Cryers, yet give me leave to ſay, you being Miniſters are look'd upon as publick Preachers, or Heralds to publiſh the Orders of your Superiors, and are no more accountable to any Man for the matter which you ſo publiſh, then a Herald who Publiſhes the Kings Proclamation to his Subjects; conſider the Conſequence, if the Judgment of what is agreeable or contrary to the Laws of the Land, the Good or Hurt of the Church, be left to the private Determination of every Pariſh Miniſter, What will become of the Authority of their Superiours? Of what uſe is the Rubrick to which they have Subſcribed, which directs them to read what the King or their Ordnary enjoyns? For in this Caſe, 'tis all one, as I ſaid before, whether you are enjoyned to Read by an Act of State or an Act of Parliament; for I think you will grant me this, **That the Nature of an Eternal Verity is no more alterable by an Act of Parliament then by an Act of Prerogative:** So that in Fine, I ſee no way for one in your Station to acquit himſelf of Evil againſt the Law either of God or Man, but by the Method before preſcribed, eſpecially in ſuch a caſe as is before us; wherein you ſay, *It may be no fault to conſent to the Declaration*, for if the Matter be ſo doubtful in it ſelf, as that it cannot be any otherwiſe determined to be either Good or Evil, then by every Mans private Judgment, by ſuch a Rule as **What is not of Faith is Sin**; you have exceeded your Bounds in preſcribing a general Rule concerning it, as a like Obligatory upon all Miniſters.

IX. You ſay, *I take the* Declaration *to be a contradiction of the Doctrine of our Church by Law Eſtabliſhed.*

Our Reading it in our Churches, muſt ſerve inſtead of Addreſſes of thanks, which our Clergy generally Refuſed, tho it was onely to thank the King for his Gracious Promiſes renewed to the Church *of* England *in his* Declaration, *which was much more Innocent then to Publiſh the* Declaration *it ſelf in our Churches.*

I think my ſelf bound in Conſcience not to Read it, becauſe I am Bound in Conſcience not to approve it.

Its againſt the Conſtitution of the Church of England *which is Eſtabliſhed by Law, and to which I have Subſcribed, and am therefore bound in Conſcience to Teach nothing contrary to it while this obligation laſts.*

Your Terms are ſo general, and the ſenſe of your Arguments are ſo Ambiguous, that tho I labour to Pick out your true meaning, I am afraid of miſtaking it, if I do ſo, pray Rectifie me Candidly, and Friendly, becauſe the manner of your Expreſſing your ſelf, and not any wilful Error in me, is the cauſe of it.

You

You take the Declaration to be a Contradiction of the Doctrine of your Church by Law Eſtabliſhed; In what Sence ſhall I take your ſay ſo? Is the whole, and every part of the Declaration contrary to all, and every part of your Doctrine by Law Eſtabliſhed? This cannot be your Meaning, becauſe you take Notice of the Kings Gracious Promiſes Renewed to the Church of *England:* I can find none of the *Thirty-Nine* Articles Contradicted, nor any of your Religious Conſtitutions Invaded by any thing in the Kings Declaration; But **Your Doctrines, your Service, your Ceremonies** remain all the ſame, as they were Settled, and Exhibited to the late King *Charles* the *Second*, by the Preſidents, Biſhops, and Clergy of Both Provinces, with the ſame Civil Sanction for the uſe of them, that Ever they had: And beſides that, they are neither Contradicted nor Invaded, **The Royal promiſe you mention, is to Protect, and Maintain his Arch-Biſhops, Biſhops, and Clergy, and all other his Subjects of England, in the Free Exerciſe of their Religion, as by Law Eſtabliſhed**; and therefore if you would Free your Self from all Suſpition of Prevarication in this Point, Its incumbent on You firſt to ſhew, wherein the Kings Declaration Contradicts it ſelf, and then, wherein, in particular, It Contradicts your Doctrine, and Invades your Conſtitution; For till then, your telling openly, That You take the Declaration in General to be a Contradicton, and againſt the Conſtitution of the Church of *England* in General, may be taken, as Intended by You to Amuſe, and not to Edify your Reader:

But what is it you mean, when you ſay, Your Reading muſt ſerve inſtead of Addreſſes of Thanks, which your Clergy generally Refuſed? Did His Majeſty Require, You ſhould Thank Him for his Declaration, as He does, that you ſhould Read it; & did you Refuſe to Obey Him in that, tho' as you ſay, It was more Innocent than the Other, as you do in this? Is this Intended as a Memorial of unmannerly Diſobedience at Firſt, and undutiful Carriage at Laſt? or what is that you ſignify, by your Refuſing to Thank Him, which muſt now be Recompenced by Reading? Do you think His Command to Publiſh His Declaration, is of no more Weight, in point of State, than your paſſing of a complement with His Majeſty, in Giving Him Thanks, or that the Thing He deſigned in His *Command*, was principally to Solve the Want of your thankful Addreſſes? Let me tell you, this is not only a ſtreign of Levity in Interpreting the Reaſon of the Royal Precept for your Reading His Declaration in your *Churches*, unbecoming your Gravity, but a Surmize of a more Dangerous conſequence: **The King Commanded, that you ſhould Publiſh his Declaration in your Churches, that All his Loving Subjects might Know the Contents of it**; And you Inſinuate to them, That it is to Serve inſtead of a thankful Addreſſing, which before you Refuſed.

But you paſs from this to Matter of *Conſcience*, and herein you ſhew your Self more Subtle in your Diſtinction, of *Conſcience*, then the Learned Biſhop

Sanderson in all his Prælections on this Subject; For you seem to have a **Politick Conscience**, not to do any thing, which by consequence may Hurt (your Interest, or as you Term it) the *Church*, and herein your *Conscience* is Guided by a frequent Review, and Must'ring up the Numbers on both sides; How many may be for, and how many may be against your Reading; and finding by the Computation you make, that the greatest Number of your supposed Friends will be Disobliged by your Reading, and that more may be against it than for it: This Governs you to make as much *Conscience* of Reading the Declaration, as of Doing the most Immoral Action in Nature.

Your *Second* Distinction is of a **Temporary Conscience**, which is to Last as long as the Obligation of your Subscription, to that, you call the Constitution of the *Church of England*, lasts: By what means you will reckon your selves Discharged of this Temporary Obligation of *Conscience*, I cannot divine, unless you Reckon, that perhaps you may be Absolved from it by an *Act of Convocation*, or *Statute-Law*: But then here lies the Difficulty with me. Because

Your *Third* Distinction of the Obligation of *Conscience* seems to be of such a permanent Nature, as no Law of *Convocation* or *Parliament*, any more than the Kings Prerogative can Absolve you from: For this I take to be the Genuine Sense of this sort of *Conscience* you mention in contradistinction from the other; That you are Bound in *Conscience* not to Read the Kings Declaration, because you are bound in *Conscience* not to Approve it; And **If you make the Invariable Law, or Revealed Will of God, the Rule of your Conscientious Approving, or not Approving the Matter of the Kings Declaration**; You cannot in my Apprehension any more Approve of it, or Consent to the Reading of it, if it should be Established by **A Convocation, or Statute-Law** (the Law of God, and the Matter remaining the same, as now they are) than you can Do it at the Command of the Kings Royal Will.

Tenthly, *Possibly the People understand, that the Matter of the Declaration is against Our Principles; But is this any Excuse that we Read, and by reading Recommend that to them, which is against our Conscience and Judgments?*

Reading the Declaration would be no Fault at all, but our Duty, when the King Commands it, did we approve of the Matter of it; But to Consent to Teach our People such Doctrines as we think contrary to the Laws of God, or the Laws of the Land, does not lessen, but Aggravate the Fault.

Consenting to Teach your People such Doctrine, as you think contrary to the Laws of God, is a Fault; may be a great Fault: Tho' the Doctrine you Teach, may, in it self, be true Doctrine, because *Conscience*, though Erroneous, obliges not to Act against it: But what it is that does not lessen, but aggravate the Fault you mention, I cannot discern, For you Grant, That reading the Declaration, when

when the King commands it, if you Approved the Matter of it, would be no Fault at all: You say, It is possible the People understand that the Matter of the Declaration is against your Principles; I Answer, Tis possible they understand neither the Declaration nor your Principles, for by the Reports I hear frequently out of the *Countrys*, there may be Thousands that never Read themselves, nor heard the Kings Declaration read to them, but take the Matter of it to be, as you represent it, which to be sure is Bad enough; and thus they are kept in ignorance, and Affrighted with the conceit of it. Most certainly, if the Kings Heart were not well Assured of the *Justice* and *Clemency* towards all His Subjects in what He has Declared, It would be the most Impolitick Action imaginable for Him to command, that it should be Published, and Communicated to all of them, in the most solemn manner, when they are Discharged from all Secular Diversions, and have their Minds most Free, and Intent upon the Matter that is read to them: His Majesty Declares the Reason why He would have it thus Published, *Viz.* That they may Understand and Reap the Benefit of that General Good, which He designs for the whole Kingdom; That His chief Aim has been, not to be the Oppressor, but the Father of His People, That they may lay aside all Animosities, and groundless Jealousies, and Choose such Members of Parliament, as may do their part to Finish what He has Begun, for the Advantage of the Monarchy, over which Almighty God hath placed Him. Now, if the Matter of the Declaration would not bear the most exact Scrutiny, and Recommend it self to the Consciences and Understanding of all His Subjects: Can any Man rationally think, that this was a probable way for His Majesty to Effect the End He proposed therein? But since you put me upon Possibilities, I think it may possibly be, and very probably also, as I Gather from your Reasonings, that you do what lyes in you, to *Conceal* from your People, the Matter of the Declaration, least your People would Approve it, and Consent to Promote it.

But though you are thus Industrious to *Conceal* the Declaration, Why do you not tell us what your Principles are, for in this, you are as Dark as in all the rest? I must profess, if I had no other means of knowing what the Declaration contains, nor what your Principles are, than by what you have said in your Discourse concerning them, you deal so much in Generals, that I should never be Able to Understand either of them, nor wherein the One is against the Other.

But now let us come to the main Point, for in comparison of that, All the Rest is of little value.

You say, *For you to Consent to Teach your People such Doctrines as you think contrary to the Laws of God, or the Laws of the Land, does not lessen, but aggravate the Fault.*

You have, in your Letter, made mention of an old Maxim, The King

can do no Wrong, *And therefore if any Wrong be done, the Crime, and Guilt is the Ministers, who does it: Nor is any Minister, who does an Illegal Action, allowed to pretend the Kings Commission, and Authority for it.*

You cannot Forget who They were that before you Insisted upon this sort of Argument, nor how severely you of all Men have in your Pulpits and Prints, handled them for it; But now you think it may serve your Turn, you Revive it again.

Since therefore you make it no scruple of *Conscience* in this *Case*, to Approve such Things now, as you *Condemned* heretofore; Why should you not do it in some other *Cases* also?

The *Dissenters*, as oft as they were Summoned into your *Courts*, or elsewhere, for their *Nonconformity* to your Modes of Worship, or for Assembling to Worship in other manner, Pleaded simply, They could not Do the One, nor Forbear the Other; because in doing the first, or forbearing the last, They should Sin against their *Conscience*, and Transgress the Law of their Lord; whatever your Laws, or the Laws of the Land commanded, or prohibited: This Plea was usually Termed a meer pretence, and their Assemblies Censured by their Secular Judges, as *Riots*, *Routs*, *Seditious* or *Unlawful Assemblies*; and by your Judges they were Condemned, as Obstinate and Contumacious; and upon these Scores they suffered the Penalties inflicted: Now, though you did Publish, and cause to be Executed, such Sentences heretofore against the *Dissenters*, who made use of this Plea, as a Pure matter of Conscience, with respect to God's Law; this may be no Bar, as appears by your former instance, but that you may take up the same simple Honest Plea at this time, if you are, as they were, sincere therein, and make it for your selves now, as they did then; And by this way you may, without Intangling your selves by determining positively Doubtful Points of Law (which is not your Province) come to a fair Issue in that, which is the proper Charge of your Function as Ministers; for the *Dissenters* agree with you in this Principle, that **For any Man to Consent to Teach others such Doctrines as he thinks contrary to the Laws of God, is a great Fault:** Let the Matter of the *Declaration* therefore be fairly Discussed between you and us, with that Modesty, which becomes *Subjects*: Many *Dissenters* differ from you in their Thoughts in this point; They think **The King's Declaration is not contrary to the law of God, and that therefore it may lawfully be Read;** If any of them question any part of it, It is that wherein the King promises to *Protect* and *Maintain* the *Arch-Bishops*, and *Bishops*, as *Lord Bishops*, of which they find no Footsteps in the *Holy Scriptures*; but if they will consider, that the Dignity of Barons is only an Addition to that of a Bishop, and does neither Alter, Enlarge, or Abrogate the *Spiritual* Office; but is an Honour conferr'd upon them by the Civil *Sovereign Power*: There is no Reason for any *Dissenter*, or any other of the *King's* Subjects, to make this a scruple of *Conscience*, in regard it proceeds from a *Civil Constitution*, and

and is a Law of Mans Creation, to which, among others of like nature, every *Christian* is to submit for the *Lord*'s sake: And that you and I may as well Agree in our Thoughts about the Subject in hand, as in the *Principle* I have mention'd: Its necessary that we consider, what it is that His Majesty has Declared; I shall repeat that Point, upon which many others Depend, as a necessary Consequence, as that to which I think you take the greatest Exception: The KING declares, that **It hath been His constant Sense and Opinion, that Conscience ought not to be constrained; nor People Forced in Matters of meer Religion.**

Now its incumbent on you to shew wherein you think this Point is contrary to the Laws of *GOD*, and that you do it, is but a reasonable Request, for else you perform not your Function to your people, but will lye under the suspition of **Teaching for Doctrines, the Commands of Men**, which you know our *Lord* sharply Reproves in those that exercise the Function of Teachers.

Till you have done this, and made it plain, you have no Reason to Carp at any Thing that is naturally subsequent, as the suspending such *Penalties*, by which many of His Subjects are co-erced to Worship contrary to their *Consciences*, or pardoning Offences against such Laws, **For this is a natural Exercise of His Prerogative, as God's Vicegerent in Acts of Goodness and Clemency**; It can be no Offence to GOD, that the Execution of such Laws be neglected by the King's Ministers, or Suspended by Himself, till they can be Repealed by *Parliament*, which ought never to have been made, and could never be obeyed, without Transgressing the Law of *GOD*: The King's lawful, proper, and necessary Prerogative, is to provide for all Exigents, wherein there is no provision made by a particular Law, and to suspend such particular Statutes, as were from the Beginning, or in process of time, prove useless, or burthensom to a multitude of His Subjects, and **Wherein no particular Subject is injured, as to any Right, or Privilege, which he can claim by Law**: so that till you have performed your Task, and shewed that this Doctrine, which the Declaration Teacheth, is against the Law of God, and what Branch of the Divine Law it is against, that the Penalties whereby Men are compelled to Worship contrary to their *Consciences*, should be suspended: No more need to be said to this, taking it singly, as it is a Matter of pure *Conscience*, supposed by you to be an Offence against the Law of God.

But I consider how you state it with a double Aspect, having an Eye both to the Laws of God, and to the Laws of the Land, and that not conjunctively, but disjunctively: *It is an Aggravated Fault with you to Consent to Teach your People such Doctrines as you think contrary to the Laws of God, or the Laws of the Land*, that so you may have a double string to your Bow: If you cannot prove the Doctrine of the Kings *Declaration* to be contrary to the Laws of God, yet you cannot consent to Teach it your People, because you think it is contrary to the Laws of the Land: nevertheless taking your Reasoning

soning to be consistent with it self, having before shewed, you did not Approve of the Matter of the *Declaration*, I cannot suppose you made mention of the Laws of God superfluously, or vainly, and therefore it remains as a Charge upon you to declare plainly, Whether you think it contrary to the Laws of God, or not: And having Repeated this, that you may take the more Notice of it, I'le pass to the next Branch, and that is for you to shew, wherein it is contrary to the Law of the Land; the Reasons for this I shall give you in my Remarks upon your next Paragraph.

Eleventhly, Say you, *It is to Teach an unlimited, and universal Toleration, which the Parliament in 1672. declared Illegal, and which has been Condemned by the Christian Church in all Ages.*

It is to Teach my People, that they need never come to Church more, but have my Free Leave, as they have the Kings, to go to a Conventicle, or to Mass.

It is to Teach the Dispensing Power, which Alters what has been formerly thought the whole Constitution of this Church, and Kingdom, which we dare not Do, till we have the Authority of Parliament for it.

Let us consider what part of the King's *Declaration* may be supposed by you to do the Things here Alledged, and whether, what you are required to do, be as to the Matter of it, of any other Nature, than what has heretofore been Approved by Authority of *Parliament*.

His Majesty, after the suspention of all *Penal Laws* in matters Ecclesiastical, for not coming to Church, or not Receiving the *Sacrament*, or for any other Nonconformity to the Religion Established, or for, or by reason of the Exercise of Religion in any manner whatsoever, is pleased to Declare upon what Terms, and in what Manner All His Loving Subjects have **Free leave to Meet, and Serve God after their own Way, and Manner.**

Now I must pray you to Interpret what you mean by an Unlimited, and Universal *Toleration*, for you are still in Generals, Is it such an Unlimited, and Universal *Toleration*, as gives all Men Liberty to Meet in such manner, and to do, and say as they please: There seems to me many Restrictions in the *Declaration*, the Meeting must be **for the Exercise of Religion,** and not Irreligion, and though All may Meet, and Serve in their Own Way, yet **It is to Serve God,** and not an Idol.

For my part, if I had no Fear of God before me, yet I should very much fear severe Corporal punishment from the Hands of the *Civil Power*, if I should Meet, and openly preach Blasphemy, Idolatry, or any other Doctrine of immortality, against the Light, and Law of Nature given to, and inscribed on the Heart of every Man; For tho' the King is pleased to say, **I shall not be compelled to perform any Act of Worship contrary to my Conscience,** I am nevertheless Accomptable for all Things that I openly and voluntarily, without any compulsion do, or say, which fall under the Cognizance of the Civil Magistrate, as all things do, which are against the Reason of Mankind, and common Light and Law of Nature; and tho' there should be no Statute

Statute Law in the Case, **The Comman Law of the Land is grounded upon the Law of Nature, and no way suspended by the King's Declaration,** and by this, open Scandals against the Light of Nature are Punishable by the Civil Judges.

But you say, *an unlimited, and universall Toleration the Parliament in* 1672 *declared Illegall*; It may be so, but I doe not know it; I have seen no Copy of any Law, or Ordinance of Parliament applicable to the point in hand: If you Intend to prove the Kings present *Declaration*, was declared to be Illegall by the Parliament in 1672, you must mend your Common Fault of Dealing in General, For it is all one, and no more a Proof of any thing being *Declared* Illegal in a Parliament, to Quote onely the year, without repeating the Words of the Law, and applying the matter of the *Declaration* to it, then if you had said it of your Own Head, or mention'd for a proof of your Assertion, a Vote of the House of *Commons*, which was Published by Order of their *Speaker*, *Jan*: 10. 1680, Wherein it was resolved to be the Opinion of that House, **That the Prosecution of Protestant Dissenters upon the Penal Laws, was at that time Grievous to the Subject, a Weakening of the Protestant Interest, an Encouragement to Popery, and Dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom.**

Your next Assertion is, *That an unlimited and universal Toleration has been Condemned by the Christian Churches, in All Ages*; If you mean by this, that the Christian Churches in All Ages did Assume to themselves a Power of Judging, and Jurisdiction over all men that were without the Church, or that the Church in all Ages did by **Temporal Penalties** constrain men to come into the Church, or when they were there, **to Worship contrary to their Consciences**, or to Abide there, when they had no Heart to do so, but would Forsake their Faith, their Profession, or their Christian Doctrine, and Conversation, and also their Assemblys: I think you are very much mistaken in the Christian Doctrine and Practise of the Churches in the primitive Ages: Surely I may say in this, as in the Rest, Shew me an **Apostolical Authority** for such a Practise; And I have so much the more Reason to insist upon this, Because Christs Disciples in the primitive Age, were **All Volunteers**, Suitable to the Doctrine which Our Lord, and his Apostles Taught, Repentance from Dead Works, and Faith in the Son of God, which are Convictions, and Operations upon the Mind of Man, and necessary Qualifications to the being of a True Christian, and the profession of them to the being of a Visible Christian, and the *Doctrine* of *Self-Denial* to his Continuance in his Profession; The *Doctrine* is plain, **Whosoever Will, let him take of the Water of life Freely, You will not Come to me that you may have life**; and when many of those, who for some time professed to be our Lords *Disciples* went back, and Walked no more with him, That which was the Ground of the Others perseverance was, that with him were the words of Eternal Life, and that they Believed, and knew that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that therefore there was none Else to whom they could Go;

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The Apoſtle Foretels us, That in the Latter Times, ſome would Depart from the Faith, Giving heed to ſeducing *Spirits*, and Doctrines of Devils; That there would be Mockers Walking after their own Ungodly Luſts; that ſuch They were, who being ſenſual, and having not the *Spirit*, ſeperated themſelves, and the Apoſtle John ſays Expreſsly, that in his day there were **Many Antichriſts**, who went out from us (that is from the Apoſtles, and Churches) but they were not of us; For if they had been of us, they would have Remained with us, But **They went out, that it might be made Manifeſt, they were not All of us**: And this the Apoſtle makes as the Characteriſtical Note, by which he Knew it was the Laſt time.

Now as I cannot find the Leaſt Mention in any One word, Doctrine, or Precept, that any perſons were, or ſhould be Compelled, by **Outward Force** to come or continue in the Chriſtian Church in the Firſt Age, ſo neither can it be agreeable to the Mind of Our Lord, that any perſons ſhould be Compelled by **Temporal Penalties** ſo to do againſt their Minds in After Ages, Unleſs you can ſhew us, that the Doctrine of *Chriſt*, and his Apoſtles are not the ſame in After Ages, that they were when they were Firſt delivered.

Say you, *It is to Teach my People that they need never come to Church more, but have my Free Leave, as they have the King's, to go to a Conventicle, or to Maſs.*

Does any thing of this kind Flow naturally from the King's *Declaration?* Does that Engage or Incline you, or any Man elſe to teach any Doctrine contrary to his own Sentiment? I take it rather to be an Encouragement to do, and ſay ſincerely what they apprehend, and believe to be the Will of God, relating to the Worſhip of himſelf, and that your Leave is neither Asked, nor Granted in my going from your Church, further than this, That if I be Excommunicate by you for it, you cannot thereupon, by your *Certificate*, obtain as formerly, the Writ **De Excommunicato Capiendo**, to make me a perpetual Priſoner, whilſt the King is pleaſed to Suſpend the Execution of that Penalty.

The *Declaration* does not Teach any of your Hearers, that they need not come to Church, and Worſhip God any more there in that Way and Manner, if in their Own Conſciences they are Convinced they ought ſo to do; It does not Forbid your Teaching or Reading to your People any *Doctrines*, or *Homilies* Approved of by the Church of England, Queen *Elizabeth*'s Injunctions, (which ſhe Enjoyned to be Read in your *Churches* Four Times in a Year,) or any thing Elſe by which they may be Inſtructed in the knowledge, or diſcharge of their Duty to God in your *Churches*.

You greatly undervalue your Miniſtry and Doctrine, to ſuppoſe that there are no Arguments to prevail with your People to come to your Church, but only **Temporal Scourges**, For if you have the Truth of God on your ſide, as no Humane Law can Alter the Nature of it, ſo you are at Liberty, notwithſtanding any thing in the *Declaration*, to Preach it to your People.

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The Declaration is an Incitement to all the King's Subjects **to Worship God**, and no enticement for any of them to forsake his Worship, and that they may respectively serve God, (as the Christian Religion teaches, in Holiness and Righteousness) without fear: His Majesty promises Equal Protection to all who do worship God in such Way and Manner, as each of them Understand and Believe, it is his Will they should do; And in the first place gives the Royal Countenance and Protection to **all of the Church of England in their worshiping of God in their Churches, as by Law Established**; So that you make a wrong Gloss upon the Declaration, in insinuating that it Teacheth your People, that they need never to come to Church more, or that they have the King's Free Leave, or Yours, contrary to their own Minds and Consciences to forsake the Church, or to go to a Conventicle, or to Mass. For **there is nothing in the Declaration that requires, gives Leave or Countenance to any man to forsake that Religion, and way of Worship to which his Conscience obliges him**, or to Dissemble, and play the Hypocrite, in forsaking of any one way, and (in appearance) to adhere to another, if he do it not in sincerity, but against his Mind and Conscience.

But we are now come to another Point, at which you seem to stick more than at all the rest.

Say you, *It is to Teach the Dispensing Power, which alters what has been formerly thought the whole Constitution of this Church and Kingdom, which we dare not do, till we have the Authority of Parliament for it.*

Let this Matter then, as you say in your Letter, be examined Impartially, and take in here also that Question I touched upon before; Whether the Matter of the King's Declaration herein be contrary to the Laws of the Land? Whole Treatises have been Written upon this Subject, with great Evidence to Manifest **the Kings Right of Indulgence in Spiritual Matters**, which you may do well (in Order to your Satisfaction) at your Leisure to Peruse: I shall here Instance only in some few Cases, wherein the Kings of *England*, have for several Ages past Exercised such a **Dispensing Power**; and in their Grants, Tolerated a Dissent from the Religion and Ceremonies by Law Established, which have been, either not Question'd at all in Parliament, or there admitted to be legally done: Queen *Elizabeth* in her Reign, granted many Dispensations of this kind; and as is credibly Reported, to some Lay-men to Preach publickly. Several Grants have been made before, and in the Reigns of the three last Kings, both to Foreigners here, and to their own Subjects abroad, for the Exercise of Religion in their own Way; with a *Non Obstance* to the Statute in Force, for Uniformity in Religion. The Act for Uniformity in the 14th Year of King *Charles* the Second, takes notice of those Grants to Foreigners; and Provides, **that the Penalties of that Act, shall not extend to such Churches as have been Allowed, or shall be Allowed by the King, his Heirs or Successors.**

The Act for Suppression of Seditious Conventicles, though it do not in expreſs Words grant a Licenſe for any Number of Perſons, not exceeding four beſides the Family, to meet under Pretence of Exerciſing Religious Worſhip, otherwiſe than according to the Lyturgy and Practice of the Church of *England*; yet it doth not make it Penal for any ſo to do, except they exceed that Number: And the common Interpretation given of it, by your ſelves and others, and Encouragement taken thence has been, That it was Tantamount to ſuch a Licence; and this, I think, fully reaches that, which you call **the Matter of the Declaration** that you cannot approve of: For if you admit, as you have done in all the Arguments I have ſeen upon this Point, that it was Allowed, that four Diſſenters beſides the Family might meet, and Worſhip in other manner than is by Law Eſtabliſhed, without Incurring any Temporal Penalties thereby, **the Paucity or Greatneſs of the Number, cannot alter the Religious Nature of the Matter**; What's lawful for Four, is lawful for Four Thouſand, with reſpect to the Matter of Worſhip; The reſtraining the Number, is only the Policy and Prudence of the Civil State, which may be Limited or Enlarged at Pleaſure: And by this Act, It is **provided, That Nothing therein Contained ſhall Extend to Invalidate, or Avoid his Majeſties Supremacy in Eccleſiaſtical Affairs, but that his Majeſty, his Heirs and Succeſſors, may from Time to Time, and at all times hereafter, Exercriſe and Enjoy all Powers and Authorities in Eccleſiaſtical Affairs, as fully and as amply, as himſelf and his Predeceſſors have or might have done the ſame, any thing in this Act Notwithſtanding**: And I think, the Exerciſe of the King's Power, is as naturally applicable to his Diſpenſing with the Limitation of Numbers, in this Caſe, as to any other Clauſe in that Act; which without this Eſpecial Proviſion, might have been Conſtrued, *an Abridgment of the King's Supremacy.*

To make good this, That the King's Diſpenſing Power in His Declaration, alters what has been formerly thought the whole Conſtitution of this Church: It is Incumbent on you, to ſhew wherein it does ſo, more than has been done in any Caſe of the like Nature heretofore, by any former Royal Diſpenſations, Grants, or Authority in Parliament.

And tell me ingeniouſly, if without any Offence againſt the Holy Scriptures, the King may not, if He ſo pleaſe, Grant a Diſpenſation to His **Own Subjects**, as well as to **Strangers and their Offſpring**, (even after they are become *Denizens*, and underſtand Our Language) **to Worſhip God after their own Way and Manner**? And whether among all the Juriſdictions Annexed to the Crown, which heretofore have been, or may lawfully be uſed for the Reformation or Order of the Eccleſiaſtical State, there be no manner of **Diſpenſing Power** Contained?

12. Say you, *No Men in* England *will be pleaſed with Our Reading the Declaration, but thoſe who hope to make great Advantage againſt us, and againſt Our Church and Religion.* This

This is a bare Supposition, arising meerly from your own Disturbed Imagination, which is through Prejudice so Darkned, that you cannot discern between your Friends and your Enemies: I can tell you of many, who neither Hope, nor seek to make any Advantage against you, your Church or Religion, that are displeased at your refusing to Read, because you thereby give an Advantage to such as may be your Adversaries, which they could never have gained by your Compliance with the King's Order.

You afterwards suggest, That the Dissenters, who are Wise and Considering, are sensible of the Snare themselves, and though they desire Ease and Liberty, they are not willing to have it with such Apparent Hazzard of Church and State.

But if there be any Dissenters who deserve the Epithites you give them, you have by your Severities kept them at such an uncharitable Distance from you, that you are unacquainted with their Temper; and thence itis, that as on the one Hand you Misrepresent them, that you may render them Equally Obnoxious to the Government with your selves, as giving Countenance to your Disobedience: So on the other Hand, you suspect them without Cause, to be seeking an Advantage against you, your Church and Religion: You cannot but know, that the Generality of Dissenters (who have rendred their solemn Thanks to the King for His **Indulgence**, and the **Establishment** proposed in His Declaration,) are for the Reading of it, That all the King's Subjects may understand, and in their places, pursue the Contents of it to Effect: Therefore, upon what Grounds you suggest, (as if you spoke their Language) that they are not willing to have their Liberty in the Way which the King propoles, I cannot Imagine.

You Term it with such **Apparent hazard of Church and State**; They Apprehend and Express it, with **Apparent advantages of Church and State**, and that which has a direct Tendency to settle Both on such a **Rightcous Foundation**, as may preserve them in a safe and prosperous State to **Perpetuity**.

But, is not this to flatter such among the Dissenters, as you can Intice to hearken to your Insinuations, that they may be thought Wise and Considering? For you tell them, *When there is an Opportunity of shewing your Inclinations without Danger, they may find you are not such Persecutors as you are Represented:* But while you speak of their being sensible of a Snare, are not you laying a Snare for them? How long may they wait for such a Season, wherein you may in your own Apprehension without Danger, Manifest any Inclinations or Kindness towards them? Immediately after the House of Commons Declared, That the Prosecution of Dissenters, was a weakning of the Protestant Interest, you Promoted it with greater Vehemence than ever before: If the King at any time dispense with *Penal Laws*, you Cry out, *The Dispensation is Illegal*: As oft as any Bill of Comprehension has been brought into Parliament to touch any thing of your Constitution, so as to enlarge it beyond its present Streightness, it hath met with Oppo-

ſition from your Ordinaries: So that the Dulleſt Diſſenters in *England*, have been ſenſibly taught by you, That there has been no Opportunity, wherein you could without Danger, ſhew them any kindneſs for Twenty Eight Years paſt; and if any Diſſenters ſhould be ſo Catch'd in the Snare of your Inſinuations, that at ſome time or other hereafter, there may happen an Opportunity, wherein you may be kind toward them, as to let go the preſent Seaſon, wherein His Majeſty Propoſes, **a Legal and Perpetual Eſtabliſhment both of your Church-State and their Freedom from Temporal Penalties for Nonconformity to it**; I ſhall not take ſuch Diſſenters to be in this Caſe, either Wiſe or Conſiderate.

13. Say you, *Reading the Declaration, is to Recommend to Our People, the choice of ſuch Perſons to Sit in Parliament, as ſhall take away the Teſt and Penal Laws, which moſt of the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation have declared their Judgment againſt.*

Our Reading will Diſcourage, Provoke or Miſguide, all the Friends the Church of England has; Have we not Reaſon to Expect, That the Nobility and Gentry, who have already Suffer'd in this Cauſe, when they hear themſelves Condemned for it, in all the Churches of England, Will think it time to mend ſuch a Fault, and Reconcile themſelves to their Prince; and if our Church fall this Way, is there any Reaſon to expect that it ſhould Ever Riſe again?

Theſe Conſequences are almoſt as Evident, as Demonſtrations; and let it be what it will in it ſelf, which I foreſee, will Deſtroy the Church of England, and the Proteſtant Religion and Intreſt; I think I ought to make as much Conſcience of Doing it, as of Doing the moſt Immorall Action in Nature.

If We muſt compare Conſequences, To Diſ-oblige all the Nobility and Gentry, by Reading the Declaration, is likely to be much more Fatal then to Anger the Diſſenters.

By Your Miſtaking, and Miſrepreſenting the Sentiments of the Diſſenters; You have given me Cauſe to Suſpect, You may be Miſtaken in ſome things which you have Aſſerted concerning the Nobility and Gentry; particularly in that you make no diſtinction, between **the Repeal of the Penal Laws**, and that of the Teſt; which diverſe of the Nobility and Gentry in their ordinary Diſcourſes on this Subject have Done; and this ſeems to me the more Remarkable, becauſe you make it Equally as Neceſſary for the preſerving your Conſtitutions, to keep the **Penal Laws** on Foot, as the Teſt.

Secondly, You lay, in my Opinion, too great a Streſs upon your Reading; Do you ſuppoſe, None of your Friends to have any better Diſcerning, then to be Miſguided in their Judgments by the bare Reading the Declaration? No more Reſolution then to be Diſcouraged by it? No more Charity, then to be Provoked to be your Enemies by it?

I cannot ſee any Reaſon you have to Expect, that your Reading the Declaration, ſhould lay any of the Nobility or Gentry under any Conviction of a Fault, or that they would reckon themſelves Condemned (if it had been or ſhould be read in all the Churhes of

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England) for any thing which they have Done or Suffer'd in that you call **this Cause.**

His Majesty has been pleased to Declare the Reason of the Changes He has made in Civil and Military Officers; **not thinking any ought to be Employed in his Service, who will not Contribute towards the Establishing the Peace and Greatness of their Country:** If a Question be put to any Noble Man, or Gentleman; Whether he will give his Consent to Repeal the Penal Laws and Tests? Where such a Question meets an Inward Setled Principle, that **no man ought to be Debarr'd of his Civil Rights or Privilidge, for the sake of his Religious Opinions,** and that, **no man ought to be Compelled by Temporal Penalties to perform an Act of Religious Worship against his Conscience,** Such a Person is always prepared to give a Ready Answer; I'ts fit that all such Laws, as tend to do either of these, should be Repealed; because they Tend to Alter such **Fundamental Maxims** as should ever be preserved **Inviolable,** the One in reference to **Civil Rights,** the other in reference to the **Christian Religion:** But where the Question meets not with any such Setled Principle, but either the Contrary Opinion, or that present Policies of State may Govern in deciding it: In this latter Case, Honour and Prudence both, may be pleaded against a Pre-engagement, until they Arrive to a Satisfaction therein, by Debates on this Subject in Parliament. Who sees not, that there's a vast difference between a previous Obligation to a positive Vote in Parliament, and your Refusal to perform Such a Ministerial Act, in Obedience to the King's Order, which you have never Scrupled to do in Obedience to any Order of your Ordinary, or his Officials, without any regard had to the matter published.

But I perceive, You are now upon your Politicks, and you would therefore have it, That these Noblemen and Gentlemen, are already Engaged in the **same Cause** with your Selves, or if they be not, you do your Best that they may be so, and not be **Reconciled to their Prince**; For then you Suppose your Church would Fall, and not only So; but that if it Fall this Way, You have no Reason to Expect It should Ever-Rise again. And these Consequences you would have to pass for Demonstrations, & from your Foresight of the Event, make as much Conscience of Reading the Declaration, as of Destroying the Protestant Religion and Interest, together with the Church of *England*: I will not give my Self the Liberty for your Churches Sake, to Dilate upon the Surmises; I take them to be the Effect only of a Sudden Vertigo, raised by an Imagination, that You are upon the Top of a Precipice in imminent Danger of a Destructive Fall; When in Truth, though you are in the ASCENT above any of your Fellow Subjects; yet you have there a broad Space to Walk upon as long as you please and a safe **Descent** into the Plain, to others of your Companions when you please, and are in no Danger at all of Falling Down, from any other Cause, but the Swimming Conceipt of your Own Head.

If it were not so, You would never have taken the Method you have done, to draw your Conclusion from such Comparison of Consequences, as you have made; *to Disoblige all the Nobility and Gentry, is likely to be much more Fatal, then to Anger the Dissenters.* Would you have it Conceited, That you have Engaged the Nobility and Gentry by a Positive Promise, upon no Terms to part with the Penal Laws, or give the Dissenters any Ease, till you Signifie to them, by Reading the Declaration, That it is an Opportunity, wherein they may Do it without any Danger?

Have you no Cause, as you are a Minister of the Gospel, to relent at the Hard Measure, which You, and Others by your Instigation have Meted out to the Dissenters of all Sorts? Suppose, All the Nobility and Gentry were against the Repealing of Penal Laws, Yet I should think, If you set your Thoughts upon the proper Discharge of your Function, that Equal Justice and Clemency would Govern your Determinations more then all Worldly Policy.

But you are for putting a Question Ironically, and Answering it plainly and positively: *Cannot the King keep his Promise to the Church of England, if the Test and Penal Laws be Repeal'd?* Your Answer is, *We cannot say, but this may be; And yet the Nation does not think fit to try it; and if the Question were put to us, We think We ought in Conscience to deny them Our Selves, and we Commend those Great Men that deny it.*

This looks as if your Passions were in a high Ferment, and yet there is some appearance of an Artifice in it: It Sounds with what follows, as if you had an Assurance, That the general Vogue of the Nation, is under your management and direction, either to have or not to have a Parliament, to Repeal or not Repeal the Test and Penal Laws, as you please, —— For say you, *Are there not as high Probabilities, that our reading the Declaration will Promote the Repeal of the Test and Penal Laws, as that such a Repeal will Ruine our Constitution and bring in Popery?*

Herein you shew your selves, to be greater Artists at the Doctrine of Probabilities then any College of Jesuits, whilst you persist in your Disobedience to the Kings Order, and will not read it: *The Nation does not think fit to try*; But if you Return to your Obedience and Read, you shall thereby induce them to Try and Promote the Repeal. Let me for once after your Example (tho I come One Thousand degrees short of your skill in the Doctrine) Conjecture at a few probable Points.

First, It seems to me that you are convinced in your Conscience that there is **such an innate Vertue and Power in the matter of the King's Declaration, as will command an Assent in the minds of them that hear and consider it**; whence it may be, That you think in your Conscience it is not safe for your Interest to Read it.

Secondly, If you were not under some such Conviction, it's probable you would make as little Conscience to read it, as you did any of those Censures or Orders, which you cannot otherwise justifie, than as you therein only performed a Ministerial Act, in Obedience to your Superiours.

Thirdly, It's very probable, that it is also from hence, that in your Reasonings

onings, you run altogether upon the Topicks of *Trusting to the King's Promise*, and upon a *Repeal of the Test and Penal Laws*, and speak not a Word; either of the King's **making no doubt of the Concurrence of his two Houses of Parliament** (when he shall think fit to call them) to this Declaration of Indulgence, (which he mentions in the first Paragraph of it) or of *His Majesty's Conjuring His Subjects to lay aside all private Animosities, as well as groundless Jealousies, and to choose such Members of Parliament, as may do their part to finish what he has begun*, (in the close of it) or of any of the Clauses throughout the whole of it, or of His Majesty's Endeavours to **establish Liberty of Conscience on such just and equal Foundations, as will render it unalterable, and secure to all People the free Exercise of their Religion for ever.**

Now if this be plainly manifest, (as it is in its self, and will appear to every Man who is not scar'd by you from considering it) that it is not any one **Single Clause, but the whole and every part of the Declaration**, that the King seeks to have Established by a **Perpetual Law**; and that he would have this speedily Effected. Why is it that you descant so much upon His Royal Promise, (of the stedfastness whereof, we have had so general an Experience) as if that were all the Security intended to Perpetuity; unless you have still a Mind to Monopolize the Laws to your selves, and that none of His Subjects should have the Benefit of any Law, but such as will (though it be contrary to their Conscience) Conform to a Tittle to your Measures and Modes of Worship?

Lastly, It may be also probable, if a Parliament be speedily called, as His Majesty declares he intends it shall be, that they, when they are met, will wisely Consider, how both to gratifie the King in what he desires, and secure the Subject in all their Properties, Civil and Religious: For the Sum of all that is to be Granted, **de Novo, Is Liberty of Conscience, to worship God without incurring any temporal damage by it.** What things are already setled by Law, as to **the Religion of the Church of England, and their Possessions**, are so to continue, and be **confirmed** to them. And if such a New Law be contrived to this Purpose, as may continue for ever, it will require such Ingredients to be in it, as may by the Provisions therein made, (which the Wisdom of Parliament will readily suggest,) render it stable and perpetual, and it may be in particular, such as may prevent your suggested Jealousies of *Priests* and *Jesuits*; and also, keep you as well as them, within the Spheres of your proper Function, that all of the Clergy who expect the Benefit of other Laws, shall subscribe (in their places) to maintain this Law Inviolable under the severest Penalties.

Have your Jealousies raised such a thick Mist before your Eyes, that no Royal Promise, no setled Laws, no common Interest can dispel it, so as to give a Discerning of the proper Means to Arrive at a secure Establishment?

Bear with my *Expostulations*; I am coming to a *Close*.

It is not desired you should Part with any Laws in being, but such only as are the Causes of an **Unjustifiable Oppression**, and consequently of an **Unavoidable Contention.**

If you can justifie the Compelling of any Man by Temporal Punishments,

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to Worship God contrary to his Understanding and Conscience, bring out your strong Reasons for it, that all who are otherwise minded may be Convinced; But if you cannot do this, bring your Mind to do, and permit Right to be done to all Men herein: Even your *Enemies*, that they may have no just Quarrel against you, nor seek by any undue Attempt, to wrest themselves from under your Power: Neither you nor any others, have any Reason to fear a **Downfall**, if you are willing to depart from the Ways of **Oppression**.

It is not desired, that any Laws in being, should be **Removed** by any other means, but by **Introducing** such as are Just, Equal, and of much greater Security in their stead: Do not conceit your self safe (and that you can be secured only) under the Continuance of **Unequal** and **Oppressive Laws**; such as are against **humane Nature**, **Christian Grace**, and **known Maxims** of the Law of the Land.

I Consider how you close your Letter, That if you were never so desirous that the Dissenters might have their Liberty, yet you cannot consent they should have it **this Way**, which they will find the dearest Liberty that ever was Granted: I am afraid from First to Last, least I should mistake your Meaning; You have said before, *You dare not Teach the Dispensing Power, till you have the Authority of Parliament for it*; You cannot Read the Declaration, because it is to Recommend to your People, the Choice of such Persons to Sit in Parliament, as shall take away the *Test* and *Penal Laws*: So that you suggest, **as there is no Authority, so you are not willing there ever should be any countenance given by Authority, Either to Dispense With, or to Repeal Penal Laws against Dissenters**; Where to do your Desires that they should have Liberty Tend? You cannot consent they should have it This **Way**; that is, by a **Dispensing Power**; nor that Way, that is, **by a Repeal**. In your next, I Pray signifie what means you Propose, that are effectual for the Accomplishment of your Desires; and if upon the Contemplations thereof, you cannot find any Means in common Use heretofore, so effectual for making Way for Removal of **Spiritual Oppressions** as the stirring up **the Hearts of Princes**: In the first Place, To give the Subjects ease, by Discountenancing and Suspending such Laws, as are the Occasion of their Oppression. And in the next place, By the Royal Assent to the Advice of their great Council, to Repeal such Laws, and Establish better, and more equal in their stead;

Return to your Obedience, and acknowledge it is just and equal, that together with **your own Perpetual Establishment by Law**, Dissenters of all sorts, should by the same Law be secured in that which is *THEIR RIGHT* by the Law of GOD and NATURE, in common with all Mankind; not to be Compelled to Worship contrary to their Consciences, but to enjoy a just, and duly-stated Liberty to Worship God according to their Consciences; and that measure of Understanding of the Will of God, that he has, or shall please to Reveal to them: And if you can remove your Prejudice, and come to a right Mind in these things, I doubt not, but they will Incline you, not barely to Read the Kings Declaration in your Churches; but also to Recommend to your Auditors, (*from the Consideration of the Reasonableness, Righteousness, and Clemency of it*) the Choice of such Members to serve in Parliament, as may Happily Finish that, which His Majesty has therein Proposed, and Mercifully Begun.

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